



Subdeacon Nektarios, M.A. 🏴 38 minutes ago 4 min read

Praying with Pagans: The Golden Standard for GOARCH

By Subdeacon Nektarios, M.A.

Another recent story of heretical ecumenism just now being brought to light is that of Bishop Athenagoras of Nazianzos, a bishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOARCH), who has been discovered in many photographs participating in a joint prayer service, not with heretical Protestants or Papists in some joint prayer which is normally the case, but this time, in what can be seen as something worse. Bishop Athenagoras (Ziliaskopoulos) was photographed participating in and praying with pagan Hindus at the largest Hindu temple outside of India. This Hindu temple, named Baps Swaminarayan Akshardham was recently “consecrated” to their demonic pagan gods in Robbinsville, New Jersey at the end of 2023. It has been reported that Bishop Athenagoras was a participant at the so-called consecration of their demonic temple on October 9th, 2023. However, these photographs show the GOARCH bishop participating in a so-called Interfaith Harmony Day, a few days prior on October 4th, 2023.



Does this exonerate this pseudo-bishop from violating the canons of the Church and participating in heretical ecumenistic inter-faith prayer event? No, not in the least. According to the Hindu temple website’s news release about the event, it detailed that, “Throughout the event, attendees engaged in interfaith dialogues, prayers, and cultural exchanges. It was a vibrant and enlightening experience that highlighted the shared values, ethics, and principles that connect individuals across different religious traditions” [1].

Yet again, in a seemingly endless list of examples we can see a bishop from the Greek Archdiocese violating the Holy Apostolic Canons without a second thought to help spread the GOARCH message of ecumenism and the total erasing of the ecclesiological boundaries of the One, Holy Catholic, and Apostolic Church. In any event, Bishop Athenagoras, like so many of his fellow-bishops, is violating Apostolic Canon 45, Canon 64, and Canon 33 of the Council of Laodicea which state respectively:

Canon XLV: Let a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, who has only prayed with heretics, be excommunicated: but if he has permitted them to perform any clerical office, let him be deposed [2].

Canon LXIV: If any clergyman or layman shall enter into a synagogue of Jews or heretics to pray, let the former be deposed and let the latter be excommunicated [3].

Canon XXXIII: No one shall join in prayers with heretics or schismatics [4].

Not only did Bishop Athenagoras by participating in the religious events pray with these pagan Hindus and give a speech to them in their temple, he also accepted what is known as a Hindu *Mala* (garland) which to the average person's eye is just a simple nice gesture of friendship; but with all things in Hinduism, much the same as the practice of yoga, these *Mala* or flower garlands have a specific meaning. "Flowers, in the form of a *Mala* (garland), were utilized for the adoration of gods, men and women. [...] Flowers are yet more important in religious rituals. Garlands serve as offerings to the gods in magnificent temples, in domestic rituals, and in public ceremonies of devotion. The name of the Hindu worship ritual '*puja*' [e.g. a worship ritual for Hindus] that translates to the 'flower act' emphasizes the significance of flowers in the religious context. [...] Garlands are not only used to decorate gods and individuals but also roads, houses, palaces, and even cities. [...] Welcoming guests with a high degree of hospitality is ingrained in the Indian culture. Considering that the tradition of welcoming guests is based on the ancient Indian dictum *Atithi Devo bhava* that translates to 'may the guest be a god unto you'; it is only apt that, like the gods, the guests are also welcomed with garlands as a symbol of good will and honour" [5].



Bishop Athenagoras (GOARCH) Receiving the Hind Pagan Mala (Garland)

We can see that this simple act of receiving this Hindu *Mala* garland, in the religious context, which is the reason that the bishop was there, is highly problematic in that he is accepting and wearing something that is religiously identified as an “offering” to their demonic gods and here we have a supposedly Orthodox bishop accepting it with a smile, and placing this *Mala* over his *Ryassa*, and on top of his *Engolpion* that has an icon of the Most Holy Lady Theotokos.

This is yet another bishop and another example that the pseudo-bishops of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate in general, are not Orthodox Christians but only playing a role, dressed as Orthodox bishops, not living the faith as it was once delivered to us by the Fathers. How much longer will those under the jurisdiction of the Greek Archdiocese of America and the Ecumenical Patriarchate tolerate this apostasy of their bishops? It is time for all Orthodox Christians to heed the words and command of Saint Paul the Apostle who states in his scriptural Epistle to the Thessalonians saying, “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” (2nd Thessalonians 3:6, KJV).



References

[1]. “Celebrating Interfaith Harmon,” Baps Swaminarayan Akshardham – North America, accessed January 9th, 2023, <https://www.baps.org/News/2023/Interfaith-Harmony-Day-24199.aspx#:~:text=On%20October%204%2C%202023%2C%20twenty,Mahamandir%20on%20October%208%2C%202023>.

[2]. The Canons of the Holy and Altogether August Apostles, “Canon XLV,” in *Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 14*, ed. Philip Schaff & Henry Wace (Peabody: Hendrickson Publications, 1999), 597.

[3]. Ibid., 598.

[4]. The Canons of the Synod Held in the City of Laodicea, “Canon XXXIII,” in *Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 14*, ed. Philip Schaff & Henry Wace (Peabody: Hendrickson Publications, 1999), 150.

[5]. “Mala: The Floral Garlands of India,” Garland Magazine: The Stories Behind What We Make, accessed January 9th, 2023, <https://garlandmag.com/article/mala-the-floral-garlands-of-india/>